From: Rlamorgese@aol.com@inetgw
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 1:46pm
Subject: Microsoft settlement

To: Dept. of Justice

Good day. I would like to thank you in advance for considering my, and other citizens', opinions in this matter. It is rare that the democratic process is applied so directly to a specific issue. Yet in this case I do beleive it to be justified. The Microsoft issue is one which affects every American, whether they are conscious of this fact or not.

It is no surprise that computer technology has become an ever increasing component of our economy. Rare is the worker in this nation that would not have some interaction with a computer on any given day. This could refer to myself, who works in an office. It could refer to a high school kid who uses the computer register at a coffee shop or restaurant. My point being, if an American citizen wishes to work in this country, the computer is inescapable. It is a tool most every American will have to use in some capacity. Therefore, it is a tool which must be open to innovation. A tool which must be secure.

Microsoft has for too long stifled others from developing competing programs. Now, I will confess. I am not a computer guy. I don't write code. Have never opened up a computer to install anything. Don't even subscribe to Wired. But I do know that when I have attempted to run non-MS applications with Windows, I have run into compatablity issues. When an application that does run well on MS OS, within a year or two it is beaten out of the system. I have seen the death of Netscape at the hands of Internet Explorer. I have seen WordPerfect killed by Word. I have seen this countless times with other applications. And this is not because MS products are the best. It's because I wake up one day to find I have no choice but to use Internet Explorer. My other options have been taken away, or so marginalized that in order to view web-sites, I need IE. This is not consumer choice. This is consumer blackmail.

Now, I'm not here to disparage MS products. Personally I have found that they crash just as frequently as anyone else's. I'd just like to have a proper settlement that allows me to choose the crashes I like. And finally, with recent events in September, there does seem to be a national security issue here. Regardless of how great MS might claim to be, regardless of how "saintly" there business acts, it is dangerous to have one company's code control so much of the computer market. If a foreign or domestic terrorist were to go after our computer network, what system model would you want? 90% controlled by one set of code. Only one set of code to infect. Only one set of code to find the weakness in. Or multiple codes, distributing the network across many OSes. This need not mean incompatability. I can read a Word doc on a Mac or a PC. Yet it would be difficult to infect the Mac and the PC with the same virus/hack. Maybe not impossible, but more time consuming. We currently have loaded our target into one convenient location for any of our country's enemies. We should no better now. The military knows this kind of strategy already. Spread yourself out so that in event of attack you may lose a portio n, but not the whole.

In conclusion, the current settlement with Microsoft poorly defines their software for legal purposes, does not truly prevent further monopolization of the market by Microsoft, and has no punitive measures for the damage Microsoft has already inflicted on other companies and the American people. This is unacceptable. Teddy Roosevelt did better than this last century with breaking up a newly emerged economic monopoly. I suggest we study our history on this one.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this letter.

Sincerely,
Robert S. LaMorgese
Citizen